



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Chairmanship-in-Office's Three Personal Representatives for Tolerance

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 10, 2011

The United States welcomes today's important discussion addressing issues of intolerance and discrimination in the OSCE region. We are pleased that the Chairmanship's Personal Representatives for Tolerance, Ambassador Adil Akhmetov, Mr. Massimo Introvigne, and Rabbi Andrew Baker are able to join us at the Permanent Council.

We commend the Personal Representatives for their efforts over this past year and we appreciate their partnership, demonstrated through joint country visits and active participation in OSCE events. The Personal Representatives play a critical role in highlighting national efforts which promote the protection and inclusion of persons belonging to minorities as well as drawing attention to areas where governments need to make critical progress.

We encourage close coordination between the Personal Representatives and ODIHR to promote and encourage tolerance and nondiscrimination. The Personal Representatives are uniquely positioned to influence participating States and to call for greater political will. Through ODIHR, participating States can seek tangible assistance in order to help them meet their tolerance commitments. We also support the work of the High Commissioner on National Minorities in this area, including his cooperation with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

We remain deeply concerned by the presence of prejudice, racism, and xenophobia in the region. Prejudice, intolerance, and hate can motivate extreme violence as well as insidious harassment towards racial, religious and ethnic minorities such as migrants, Muslims, Jews, and Roma as well as towards lesbian gay, bisexual and transsexual individuals and other vulnerable populations. ODIHR's hate crimes report demonstrates the severity of the problem and the inadequacy of our response. We call on participating States to enact appropriate legislation, to collect disaggregated data on hate crimes, to train law enforcement to conduct more effective investigations and prosecutions of hate crimes, to assist victim communities, to engage with civil society on common efforts, and to promote integration. We encourage participating States to make use of ODIHR's new law enforcement hate crimes training and other programs and tools that can assist in addressing the problem.

We also note that this is the United Nations' "International Year for People of African Descent," which has special relevance for this discussion of tolerance. Reports from our Department of Justice, the European Union's Fundamental Rights Agency, the Swiss Federal Commission Against Racism, and the Open Society Institute indicates higher incidence of hate crimes, racial profiling by law enforcement, and other forms of discrimination towards

the more than forty-two million people of African origin in the OSCE region. Secretary Hillary Clinton noted in her recognition of the International Year, “[this is a time] to remember our hemisphere's shameful history of slavery and to reaffirm our commitment to eradicate racism and reduce inequality wherever it lingers.”

As Secretary Clinton noted to in her remarks above, in the United States, people of African descent endured the despicable institution of slavery. But these same people have overcome a history of oppression, racism and bias to contribute —politically, economically, culturally, and in so many other ways—to the strength and success of our country. The contributions of Dr. Martin Luther King, to whom a monument was recently dedicated in Washington D.C., to the peaceful struggle for civil rights won him the Nobel Peace Prize and made him a role model around the world. The election of President Barack Obama smashed through a racial barrier that was insuperable when he was born in the middle of the civil rights movement. There remains much work to be done, however, and the United States will continue to cultivate tolerance and eliminate prejudice as a national priority. We believe that fighting racism, xenophobia, and other forms of intolerance not only corrects injustice in the treatment of peoples, but also fundamentally strengthens the nation, society, and the world as a whole.

We welcome initiatives by the troika and elsewhere in the region to commemorate the International Year with events that support the history, heritage, contributions, and equal participation in all aspects of life of African descendants. Consequently, we look forward to today's Supplemental Human Dimension Meeting on the Prevention of Racism, Xenophobia, and Hate Crimes, and we are pleased to have funded ODHIR's Roundtable for civil society representatives on the contemporary forms of racism and xenophobia affecting people of African descent in the OSCE region.

Finally, as we head to Vilnius, which also provides an opportunity for the Mediterranean Partners to nurture and support civil society initiatives, we underscore the importance of tolerance in the dialogue. Increasing the participation of persons belonging to minorities and ensuring that political and legal systems reflect multicultural and religious diversity is central to fostering unity in our societies and winning the fight against intolerance, whether occurring in the midst of a democratic transformation or through the steady progress to democratic institutions.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.